

MERRY CHRISTMAS, SPACE CASE

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by James Marshall

Themes: Families, Fantasy and Imagination, Feelings, Holidays, Humor

Grade Level: 2–6 (ages 8–12)

Running Time: approximately 13 minutes

SUMMARY

This is a comic version of a favorite childhood fantasy—having an imaginary friend to help deal with the bullies on the block. The story's hero, Buddy McGee, has a friend who is a thing from outer space. When his parents decide to spend Christmas at Granny's house, Buddy worries that his friend won't be able to find him. At Granny's house, Buddy meets the Goober twins, the bullies who live next door. They brag about the expensive presents they're going to get and make fun of Buddy for talking about his friend from outer space. The terrible twins even threaten to beat Buddy up if his friend doesn't appear. Fortunately, in the middle of a party a zillion miles away, the thing from outer space remembers he has a date with Buddy. After adventures with a swampful of alligators, a baby, and a science fiction movie, the thing from outer space gets to Granny's house, just in time to save Buddy and teach the bullies a lesson.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a fictional story about imaginary friends.
- Children will appreciate the use of humor in

both words and pictures.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the topic of imaginary friends, perhaps by sharing memories of an imaginary friend of your own. Ask for ideas about imaginary friends—what kinds of people or creatures are they? How do we play with them? What funny things might happen if suddenly our imaginary friends became real? After students have shared ideas, present the title of the story and explain that in this story the imaginary friend is a thing from outer space.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

In recalling and discussing the story, start with the humor. Have students tell what parts of the story made them laugh the most. Then discuss their other emotional reactions to the story. Encourage students to share how they felt when the thing from outer space really appeared. Ask them how Buddy felt about the Goober twins, and how his imaginary friend helped him to handle their threat. If someone points out that in real life imaginary friends do not come to the rescue, turn the discussion to the people in Buddy's family. Discuss how Buddy's parents and Granny help Buddy handle the bullies. If you are presenting the story during the holidays, you might also want to discuss how Buddy's imagination is closer to the spirit of Christmas than the Goober twins' expensive new bikes.

To connect the story to writing and reading, encourage students to compose their own stories about imaginary friends. Ask them to imagine funny situations for their imaginary friends to get into, and ways that the imaginary friends might help them out. Have students share their stories with the class.

Connect the story to science by having students make reports and draw pictures of real things from outer space. Ask a student team to prepare a bulletin board or study center featuring planets, comets, asteroids, stars, and real spacecraft.

Connect the story to the Christmas holidays by making tree ornaments featuring imaginary friends and things from outer space. Students will need drawing paper and crayons or paints, scissors, string, and used manila file folders or envelopes. Have students draw the objects, cut them out, and paste them on file folders or envelopes. The top of each drawing should be along a fold. After the paste dries, cut through both layers of manila. Thread a piece of string through the fold to hang the ornament.

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